

CITY COUNCIL MEETING
December 16, 1993

PROPOSED PERIODIC MEETINGS TO BE HELD
ON EAST SIDE OF TOWN

CC-6

Council Member Steve Mann suggested that the City Council hold periodic meetings on the east side of town in a certain designated area such as a school facility.

Dec 16, 92
CC-6

Phone 367-1037
December 21, 1992

Councilman Steve Mann
Lodi City Council

Dear Councilman Mann:

After reading the News-Sentinel article on December 17, I am enthusiastic about your idea for eastside town forums.

Our eastside neighborhoods are in serious trouble. I think it's going to take the combined efforts of citizen volunteers, city council, and police department to reclaim this large and valuable segment of our city from criminals, slum landlords, and city neglect.

Many of our problems were generated by previous city councils. By zoning these large eastside lots for multiple units, our neighborhoods have been destroyed. Unfortunately, it now falls upon the present council to try to rectify past mistakes.

Parking is a nightmare. My street is so clogged with vehicles the street sweepers cannot operate, which allows trash to accumulate, and traffic is often reduced to a one-way flow.

Crime is rampant. Two of my elderly neighbors are virtual prisoners in their own homes; hemmed in by window bars, afraid to go out at night for fear of being robbed or mugged. I'm in the process of organizing a Neighborhood Watch program for my neighborhood. When officer Mary Fuhs of the Lodi Police Department read off the crime statistics for just the four-hundred block of East Oak Street, I was shocked.

Last week I went to the Star Market on Cherokee Lane, and was appalled to see sexually explicit home videos publicly displayed in a grocery store. These filthy, degrading pictures are in a prominent location in a convenience store where children shop. When I complained, the clerk told me, "It's okay because they're on the top shelf and kids can't see them that well." Balderdash!

As you know, these complaints could go on and on. Many retired persons like myself cannot afford to move to a better neighborhood, so I am delighted with your proposal to focus on our eastside problems. Since low-cost housing is so scarce in Lodi, I know these fine old neighborhoods are worth reclaiming. This section of town is rapidly becoming a ghetto that drains community resources, depreciates property values, and makes "liveable, loveable Lodi" a joke for thousands of its citizens, voters, anti taxpayers.

I do not believe city government can solve this problem without the concerned support and enthusiastic participation of citizens who are directly affected. The city does not have the money or personnel to do things for people that they are capable of doing for themselves. Somewhere I heard a Dutch phrase that summed it up; "If every one sweeps in front of his own house, then the whole city will be clean." This might be a good slogan for the city council to adapt and promote.

If you have any ideas for establishing an Eastside Neighbors Commission, I would like to be involved as a volunteer. I'm a home and rental property owner, served three years on the Lodi Arts Commission, and am retired from the San Joaquin County Department of Human Services.

It seems to me Lodi already has vehicles in place to effect positive changes for the eastside, They just need to be promoted. Some things to consider are:

1. Neighborhood Watch Programs bring residents together to work for their common good. A vigorous outreach program is needed to involve more residents. Some are hesitant to be too vocal (myself included) because they fear retaliation from entrenched drug dealers.

2. Doesn't Lodi have an "eyesore" ordinance? What can citizens do to require property owners to clean up their mess? Mary Fuhs told our Neighborhood Watch group that some citizens in the Bay Area are banding together to individually sue slum owners in small claims court for depreciating their property values. If four or five claimants win a judgment of \$2,000.00 each, that's pretty good motivation for a negligent property owner to maintain his property in an attractive condition.

3. Could block grants be used to lend money to tenants or property owners to install heat-sensor lighting in dark areas where burglars like to operate? Maybe a nominal charge of 5-10 dollars per month could be billed on the individual's electricity bill until the cost is repayed. The money would then be freed up to lend to others who want security lighting.

4. If they don't dry up, how about using block grants to buy condemned alley houses and turn them into small 2-3 car parking lots? Electricity would already be in, so perhaps it would be feasible to install heat-sensor lighting for each parking area. Small parking lots would usually be full, so would not attract roving gatherings of revelers. If this worked, maybe the streets and alleys could be eventually be clear enough to allow room for two-way traffic and emergency vehicles.

5. The police bicycle patrols are excellent. I would like to see more of them. Bikes are undoubtedly much less expensive to operate than patrol cars.

6. How about a monthly letter to Eastside Neighbors? The News-Sentinel would probably publish it as a no-cost

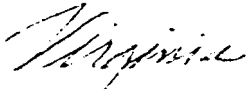
community service. Each letter could concentrate on one area, such as "What can you do about loud stereos from cruising cars and boom **boxes** that can be heard a block **away**?" (Sometimes the noise is so loud I cannot hear my own radio in my own house with the doors and windows closed.)

6. Couldn't the city council take walking tours of sections of the eastside? Poke around the alley behind Railroad Avenue and you'll hopefully come away with a sense of urgency about the deteriorating, seamier side of life for hundreds of Lodi residents.

Of course, some of these suggestions **may** not be cost-effective or are unworkable for other reasons. I do believe, tho, that **some** creative thinking is needed to upgrade the eastside. The money is drying **up**, Maybe it's possible to generate enough citizen involvement to **make** a difference. **Mary** Fuhs told **our** group about one eighty-three year old woman in the 300 block of Hilborn who has successfully involved 100 percent of her block in a Neighborhood Watch Program that **has** significantly altered the crime pattern. **There** must be many others like her out there who are willing to get involved.

I wish you tremendous success in your efforts to address eastside problems. They are real, but not unsolvable. If I can help, please call me.

Sincerely,



Virginia Snyder

Copy to: Councilman Ray Davenport
Councilman Randy Snider